



Advocacy Update

Sent May 10, 2010

Statement on Voluntary Extension of Foster Care Services

On May 16, 2010, the WRJ Board of Directors issued a statement supporting the voluntary extension of foster care services beyond eighteen years of age. Policies regarding aging-out of foster care differ in North American states, provinces, and territories, and even local jurisdictions. Research has shown that young people are not ready for adulthood at eighteen years of age. Many lack stable housing, do not finish high school, and have behavioral issues. In the United States, the *Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act (HR 6893)* was adopted in 2008 and will provide matching federal funds to enable states to extend foster care services to young adults from eighteen to twenty-one on a voluntary basis starting in October 2010.

What sisterhoods can do:

- For information about your state's policies, go to the [Fostering Connections website](#). Sisterhoods can also contact local social services department or Jewish Family and Children's Services offices for information. In Canada, the local Children's Aid Societies and [Youth In Care Canada](#) deal with foster care issues and can provide information and resources.
- Write congratulatory notes to law makers and administrators in states and provinces that have already funded voluntary extension of foster care beyond age eighteen and/or offered transitional support services to former foster youth.
- Send the WRJ statement to your local newspaper editors.
- Contact and work with local advocacy groups, such as the [Child Welfare League](#), to support voluntary extension of foster care services to age twenty-one in states with pending legislation, or urge legislators, in states which have not yet enacted legislation, to implement laws that enable participation in federal foster care grant programs in October 2010.

This statement is based on WRJ resolutions and statements and its advocacy on behalf of children's welfare in the United States and around the world. Recent social justice action in support of children's welfare include opposition to child marriage (2009), support for children's health care as integral to health care reform in the United States (2009) increased funding of the *Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act* (2009), and awareness and prevention of and child and adolescent self-destructive behavior (2005).

Child Trafficking – Canadian Sisterhood Advocacy Needed

This is an update on the January 13th social justice e-mail on child trafficking legislation in Canada. Sara Charney, WRJ vice-president just received news about the successful Winnipeg Walk to Stop Human Trafficking and an urgent request for WRJ sisterhood support of the legislation.

Next week, the Canadian Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology will review Bill C-268, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (with minimum sentencing for offenses involving trafficking of persons below the age of eighteen. Information on the Winnipeg walk events, status of the bill, and suggestions for action are included in excerpts from a letter by Joy Smith, MP (Kildonan-St. Paul, Manitoba), the sponsor of the bill.

Canada is one of the few developed countries that does not have vigorous penalties for the trafficking of children. Canadian sisterhoods, please contact your senators to support the bill or get petition signatures and send it to the address at the bottom of the petition, no later than this weekend.

For more information on WRJ and Social Justice, visit www.wrj.org/social-justice-home

Take action to hold child traffickers accountable for their heinous acts.